

About Me	2	Marketing	5	Three Year-Old Predicts Trends	7
Programming and Hours	2	Branding	6	Libraries Reach Higher	8
Customer Service	3	Giving	6		
Shopping	4	Interlibrary Loan	7		

The Hows and Whys of This Issue

By Sara Groves - Editor

For this issue of Big Sky Libraries, I'm going to try something different. First, a little background.

For each issue of Big Sky Libraries, I do a lot of reading and research, trying to come up with a theme. One of the many things about libraries that has intrigued me as of late is the comparison of libraries to bookstores, particularly those "big box" bookstores that most of America knows and loves.

I found a book on the subject, "Creating the Customer-Driven Library" by Jeannette Woodward and read it. The book directly compared libraries and bookstores in a number of ways.

My initial idea was to ask library thinkers from around the country to contribute articles on what works in bookstores and what works and doesn't work in libraries.

But then a wise library sage said to me, "Why don't you write on this theme from your perspective as a non-librarian library user and consumer?" And I thought, "Yes, why not?"

So in this issue of Big Sky Libraries, I'm going to present to you a number of articles that circulate around one theme: the customer-driven library. I'm going to share probably more than you ever wanted to know about my habits – both in a library and out of a library – with the

hope that you might see things a little differently. The goal of this issue of Big Sky Libraries is to help you think of how a library patron might use your library or see your library or even support your library.

I want to stress that I'm not interested in telling you how your library should operate. I'm not a librarian, and truthfully, I don't really understand a lot of what a librarian does behind

the scenes. I just think that sometimes we get so mired in how we do things that we don't stop to think about how people's habits and ways of doing things are changing, and because of that, how people perceive us and use what we offer. But as technology marches on and information becomes more available, people's ways of doing things are changing drastically. People expect more and want more. So this issue of Big Sky Libraries helps outline how technology

and information have affected the way my family and I do things.

Maybe this issue of Big Sky Libraries will make you stop and think about what your library is offering up and how it is being offered.

Or you might just think to yourself, "I know WAY more about this woman and her family than I ever wanted or needed to."



My Wish List from Libraries



1. I wish that I could walk into any library in Montana and check anything out with the ability to return it to my hometown library when I was through with it.
2. I wish that with my library card, I was treated as a "member" of an elite club – kind of like a museum membership where I might receive mailings, notice of special events, or members-only previews (like at book sales with new books, new collections, etc.)
3. I wish that there were no fines. If fines must exist, I wish that they were five cents a day.
4. I wish that the databases were easier to navigate and required no authentication.
5. I wish that there was children's programming in the evenings and on weekends.
6. I wish that my library building was open from 7 a.m. – 10 p.m. every day.
7. I wish that library Web sites offered book reviews, staff picks, and lists of suggested reading – for all age groups.
8. I wish that there was a "staff picks" area in the library that was updated regularly.
9. I wish that it took 24 hours to get a book from interlibrary loan and that I was able to renew the book.
10. I wish that my library offered a huge number of books, music, and videos that I could download.

About Me

Let me introduce myself. For those of you who don't know me, my name is Sara Groves and I am the marketing and communications coordinator at the Montana State Library. I work half-time and I took this job after I gave birth to my first son, a little over three years ago.

My first job was in a library. At the age of 15, I started work at my small hometown public library in northern Michigan. I worked there until I graduated from high school; then I took a work-study job at my academic library where I worked through college. I attended



graduate school in New Orleans and spent many hours darkening the stacks of my school's cavernous library completing research for articles, papers, and my thesis. I feel that I have spent the bulk of my life in libraries – in one capacity or another.

In my professional life, I have worked in business but find real joy and worth in working for non-profits, particularly those that work to promote education and the arts. To help pay the bills, I do freelance work for large advertising companies and for magazines and have taught writing classes at various universities. I am also writing a non-fiction book. For all of these projects, I do a lot of research in libraries and depend heavily on interlibrary loan to get the materials I need and on free databases to provide up-to-the-minute information. As I mentioned, I have worked at the Montana State Library for a little over three years. That is the longest I have ever worked anywhere in my life.

I am 35 years-old. I am married to Brent, who is a social worker with Child Protective Services and who is currently working on his masters degree, as well as his teaching certificate. Brent is also interested in pursuing his Ph.D. He uses the MSU academic library's online databases



The author's boys use their imaginations.

and is a heavy user of the Lewis & Clark Library for personal and educational purposes.

I have two children: Mike, who is three years old and Peter, who is eleven months. I may be biased, but they are quite possibly the two most brilliant and most beautiful children ever born. We value the library for its children's collection, and check out huge numbers of books to keep our kids occupied and stimulated and to help make them aware of the world around them. We own a home in Helena, which is a fairly continuous work-in-progress and are regular users of the home improvement and gardening sections at the library.

Programming and Hours



On any given morning, as long as it is a weekday, there are events, classes, story hours, and "mommy and me" activities to take your kids to. In fact, if I had the mornings free, I could schlep my kids to a different stimulating activity every morning of the week. On some mornings, I'd have to make a decision – story hour at the library or science class at the children's museum?

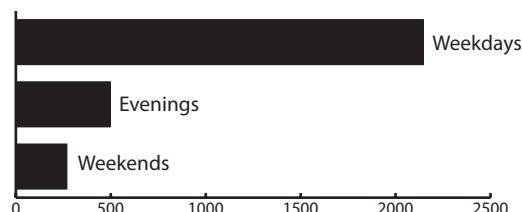
But come Saturday or Sunday, there's nothing going on but the rent.

Like most people, I work. Yes, it's only part-time, but I do work in the mornings, which seems to be when most of the children's activities and classes occur. I know I'm not the only mom who works. Times have changed and most moms do work outside of the home.

But children's programming rarely reflects that. In fact, if you took a look at a town's offerings of children-focused events, I imagine you'd be hard-pressed to find some-



Montana Public Libraries
Total Weekly Service Hours



thing offered in the evenings or on the weekends, at a time when a parent is actually available to take a child to something.

Why do stay-at-home parents have more opportunities for their children to be exposed to everything from story hour at the library to gym class at the Y? If the library offered an evening or weekend story hour or children's event, I'd be there in a heartbeat.

Customer Service

I do not like salespeople. I find few things more annoying than going into a store and having a hovering salesperson ask if I need help. What I find more annoying, however, is needing help and not being able to find them. Or finally finding someone to help me and that person cannot answer my question, leaving me to wander the aisles looking for another person who might be able to help.

My exception to my rule of disliking salespeople is Saks Fifth Avenue. For those of you who have not had the distinct pleasure of shopping at Saks, let me outline the experience for you. You have a personal shopper. Someone who knows your name, your tastes, your size, and who is not afraid to tell you that something makes you look fat. This person will call you if something comes into the store that she thinks you would like, and then she'll set that item aside, in your size and in a color that flatters you, until you get a chance to come in. She calls to tell you about sales and promotions and you always get a call if a designer is going to be doing a demonstration in the store.

Your personal shopper is also knowledgeable. She knows the entire store, which is normally the size of a large city block with multiple floors, as if she was navigating through her very own home. She knows the details of every garment and can dish on every designer. She is able to tell you what people are wearing that season, the exact cost of every pair of shoes and handbag, and she can pull a shirt off a rack on the fifth floor and find you the perfect earrings to match on floor one. Your personal shopper will also gossip with you about parties and special events, but she would never ever reveal what another of her clients might have dropped on that dress she wore to the Mardi Gras ball of the season.

Of all customer-service professionals, librarians are most like the Saks salespeople. If your library is small enough, you're probably able to identify something one of your "regulars" might like. No matter the size of your library, you're able to find what people need no matter where it is, and you can probably give them a list of resources or a stack of information that would make even the most seasoned scholar blush.

To have a valued library, librarians, like salespeople, must be devoted customer service professionals. But librarians cannot be like the

box-store employees who "specialize" in their department. They need to be more like the Saks personal shopper – able to answer any question, no matter how obscure, about anything – not just in the library, but in the world.

As with any type of customer service, it's the special touches that make a difference. For example, at my parents' hometown library, the librarian calls my folks if a new book arrives that might be up my parents' alley. When I mistakenly packed a library DVD my mom had rented for my boys as I was leaving this summer, the library forgave the rather enormous fine that resulted from my mother's delayed realization that the missing DVD must have gone back to Montana. Knowing that my parents are avid library users, when the library was raising funds for an extensive remodel, the librarian invited my parents to dinner at his house, where he trotted out his architectural drawings and models of the new facility.

At my hometown library, the Lewis & Clark Library in Helena, I don't get quite the personal attention that my folks get because the L&C Library serves over ten times the population. With that many people coming and going, it's impossible to track patrons' book preferences and call them when something comes along they might like. But one of the reasons I like the library so much is that everyone on staff is friendly, often greeting me by name, and the entire staff goes way out of their way to help if I need it. The reference staff has found countless, often out of print, books for me and my husband



that we've needed for research purposes. One day, when I off-handedly mentioned a book my three year-old loved but I could no longer find on the shelf, the children's librarian walked over to the shelf and pulled it off as if by magic. The folks at the circulation desk patiently wait as my three year-old hems and haws about which puppet to check out. Even one of the high school students that shelves books took about a half-hour one evening to help me find a huge number of books about becoming a big brother and then crawled around on the floor pulling them off the bottom shelf because my nine-month pregnant belly made that extremely difficult.

It's the professionalism, courtesy, and the willingness of the staff to go way beyond the extra mile that always makes a trip to the library a positive experience for me. If the library offered the same "customer service" level that a store such as Wal-Mart offers, the library experience would be infinitely less. There's no doubt about it: library staff can make or break the library.

Customer Service Facts You Should Know

- A typical dissatisfied customer will tell 6-10 people about the problem. A typical satisfied customer will tell 1-2 people.
- It costs 6 times more to attract a new customer than it does to keep an old one.
- Of those customers who quit, 68% do so because of an attitude of indifference by the company or a specific individual.
- About 7 of 10 complaining customers will do business with you again if you resolve the complaint in their favor.
- If you resolve a complaint on the spot, 95% of customers will do business with you again.

Customer Service Statistics You Should Know, Maria Palma - April 24, 2006;
http://www.customersarealways.com/2006/04/customer_service_statistics_yo.html

Shopping

Every year, my mom and her friends plan a five-day shopping extravaganza, where they travel to a major city and then hit the stores, shopping from sun-up until way after the sun goes down. I made the mistake of going with them one year, and by the afternoon of Day One became convinced that I was trapped in the inner circles of Hell.

I hate shopping. I hate salespeople. I hate going to stores. I hate the canned muzak that is piped through the speakers. I hate pawing through the racks of things to find the right size and color. I hate the smell of stores. I hate waiting in line to buy things. I even hate driving to the store and finding a parking spot.

So I buy virtually everything online, a practice I started as soon as shopping online became available. I remember my first online purchase, the way someone else might remember the



Nielsen's (2005) top categories of online spending with the corresponding percentage changes from 2004:

1. Apparel/clothing: \$5.3 billion (+42%)
2. Computer hardware/peripherals: \$4.8 billion (+126%)
3. Consumer electronics \$4.7 billion (+109%)
4. Books \$2.9 billion (+66%)
5. Toys/videogames \$2.2 billion (-9%)

And people once said customers would never purchase clothes online...

www.churchofthecustomer.com/blog/2005/12/online_shopping.html

birth of a child. It was a sweater from the Gap. Never mind that there was a Gap two blocks away from my apartment and I could have just walked in and gotten the same sweater in 20 minutes. I entered the Gap store online, browsed their collection and with a couple of clicks had the exact sweater I wanted in the exact right color and size. Then, in a couple of days, it was delivered right to my desk at work – manna from heaven.

After that initial experience, I became wholly devoted to online shopping, buying everything online – even groceries, trusting the good folks at Peapod to do a satisfactory job of picking the freshest lettuce and green beans for me on a weekly basis. I pointed, clicked, and waited for delivery. I never set foot in a store, even though I worked in an office that was a block off of Chicago's Michigan Avenue, otherwise known as "The Magnificent Mile," a shopper's paradise.

Like shopping, I also do a lot of my library "work" via computer. If I am looking for something in particular, I will do a search of the library catalog from home to see if something is available. I don't want to waste my time going to the library if what I need is not there.

I also regularly access the databases available through the Library's Web site, where I look up articles for work, information for a book I'm writing, and details on my favorite writers and their works. This is not something I ever do while I'm in the library.

But back to shopping. For every rule, there must be at least one exception.

For me, it was bookstores. In spite of my intense hatred of stores, I could spend hours in Barnes and Noble, perusing the shelves, reading maga-

zines, and drinking coffee. I often passed entire afternoons holed up with a stack of books and magazines I never intended to purchase. (In fact, when I purchase books, I do so online.)

In Helena, there's no grocery delivery service, so I have to go to stores in person, which is still something from which I derive absolutely no pleasure. And for reasons I can't quite put my finger on, I loathe our giant bookstore; it doesn't seem to invite me in to peruse and lounge. I really like our small independent bookstore, but there aren't any giant chairs to sink into and they don't serve coffee.

But our library? Granted, there's no coffee bar, but there are big comfortable chairs, a fountain, and even a fireplace. There's lots of natural light and the whole place seems big and airy with room to move around and breathe and think and relax – even on the busiest days. I love to park myself on one of the couches or chairs upstairs and thumb through magazines while staring out the windows that offer views of trees and a park.

In addition to feeling open and light, the library is also clean. I can count on one hand the number of times I have visited the heavily-used children's section and found dirt on the floor or dirty tissues or a stray piece of garbage, which is a real plus as the mother of an eleven-month old who puts everything in his mouth. The books are also in order, especially in the adult section, but even in the children's section. I have rarely looked something up in the library catalog, found that it is supposed to be on the shelf and then not been able to locate the item.

Going to the library, much like going to Barnes and Noble, is a special treat, a time for me to browse and relax. In fact, if I have someone to watch my kids, I often go to the library for some "me" time. But if our library offered a different experience – say if it was dirty or unorganized – I would find someplace else to go and spend my time.

Marketing

I love advertising. I'm one of those people who watches the Superbowl only to see the ads. I actually watch advertising on the Internet. It drives me crazy when my husband mutes commercials. I tear out ads from magazines and keep them in a file.

But I'm a marketing person, so marketing really matters to me. In reality though, marketing matters to everyone – even those folks who claim they hate advertising (really, how could they?). Love it or hate it – advertising, marketing, and public relations are how your public perceives you.

I've worked in library marketing for a long time now, and over the years, I've seen libraries really start to "get it." It used to be that a library newsletter would cut the mustard when it came to spreading the good word, but now libraries are reaching out in exciting and interesting ways to tell the world about what they're up to. From blogs to podcasts to Web sites to newspaper ads, libraries are finding lots of ways to keep people informed.

Of course you know about all of the things you could be doing – it's a matter of time and often money, both of which I understand. So from my perspective, where should you be spending your marketing energy?

It's simple. As a library user, I use my library's Web site at least twice a week. I can manage my account there and search the catalog – both of which I do very regularly. I also check on programming and see what's happening, check the hours, and access the databases. In my opinion, every library needs to have its own Web site. Let me stress here that it should be a Web site that is maintained – preferably daily. You should consider your Web site one more door that your patrons can go through to access your collection and services.

If you're not a Web designer, you need to hire someone to do the initial layout for you. Your Web site shouldn't be cobbled together or messy or hard to navigate; remember, think of it as that door – a way that people will perceive your library – and plan accordingly. You wouldn't have a shabby interior or exterior of your building or your collection haphazardly placed on the shelves. Same goes for your Web site. Some of my favorite library Web sites are the Ann Arbor Public Library (<http://www.aadl.org>), the Brooklyn Public Library (<http://www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org/>), the Seattle Public Library (<http://www.spl.org/>), and the Tompkins County, New York Public Library (<http://www.tcpl.org/>). Per-

haps I spend too much time looking at library Web sites.

The main thing to remember about your Web site is to think like your patrons think – not like a librarian! Patrons will often visit your Web site to see if you're open, because it's easier than sitting on the phone and listening for the right menu to hear the hours. Patrons will also check regularly to see what's happening so make sure your programming is

easy to access. A lot of the best library Web sites have drop-down menus that answer their most frequently asked questions like, "Where is the library?" or "How do I get a library card?" One of my favorite things is from the Tompkins County, New York Public Library. One of their reader advisor librarians has a blog where she challenged herself to read 100 books this year and write about each one on the blog. She's not going to make it but there are lots of good reading suggestions on there. The key, though, is that each site is easy to navigate and there's no librarian lingo on there.

Beyond a Web site, the other place where it pays to advertise (or donate your time to write a column) is your local newspaper. While many younger people only read the newspaper online, you'll reach a very valuable group of folks – baby boomers and senior citizens – if you appear in the hard copy version. Make no mistake about it – these groups hold many powerful positions in your community and are most vocal about things like mill levies. They often write into the paper to show their support or to try to dissuade others

from supporting you. By having a visible presence in the newspaper, you're constantly reminding people why they should support the library – from the new books that came in or for the story hours or special programs you offer.

And as long as we're talking about advertising in a newspaper, consider purchasing online advertising. It's a great way to reach a younger consumer (i.e. me) and the viewer can click through to your own Web site – which, of course, will provide them with a treasure trove of info to which they must simply come back.

Of course I could fill an entire issue with everything you could be doing to market all that you do! But then you'd have to hire an advertising agency and a full-time marketing person. For your time and money, these are the two places where you will get the most bang for your buck!



The What's Your Story Campaign contains extensive information and articles to help you with all of your marketing needs. Some of the many topics include:

PR Tools and Resources

- Special Projects
- Television
- Radio
- Print
- Artwork
- Collaboration
- Library Fast Facts

How-To-Guides

- News Releases
- Interview
- Get the Press There
- News Events
- Training
- Planning a Photo Op
- Making Frinds with Reporters



<http://msl.mt.gov/whatsyourstory/>

Branding

I have spent the bulk of my life working in advertising and marketing so I should know better, but I am devoted to brands. I have never had a cavity and wholly contribute that to my devotion to Crest. If my husband buys a type of toothpaste that is on sale, I will throw it away and go buy my Crest. I buy one brand of jeans, one brand of cream cheese, one brand of tennis shoe, one brand of coffee, one brand of make-up. In Montana, my brand of choice is often not readily available, but I am willing to go out of my way, often way out of my way, to purchase it.

One of the reasons I am a brand devotee is that I know what to expect from the brands I buy. I also buy them because I think they are high quality. I think the brands I buy taste better, look better, and last longer. They might be more expensive than other brands, but I think the trade-off is worth it.

For those of you who are not familiar with brands, the American Marketing Association (AMA) defines a brand as a "name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of them intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of other sellers."

I think of libraries as a brand. For our purposes here, I'm using the word "brand" in regards to libraries very loosely. For instance, some of the things that I consider part of the library brand

include rows of books, knowledgeable staff, the Internet access and wireless connections when I am traveling. People often talk about the "library smell" when they are reminiscing about library experiences. Again, I consider all of this part of the library brand.

The objectives that a good brand will achieve include:

- Delivers the message clearly
- Confirms your credibility
- Connects your target prospects emotionally
- Motivates the buyer
- Concretes user loyalty.

Libraries have always had loyal customers. I'm sure that even the very first libraries had their "regulars." I've been a regular and loyal library customer since I was a story hour attendee. In fact, story hour is one of the greatest ways for libraries to create those loyal customers. You involve two different generations and make coming to the library a habit and something to look forward to. Story hour also helps to demonstrate to parents and kids that reading is fun and important enough to carve out time for on a weekly basis.

Another part of the library brand is the infamous Dewey Decimal System. Every kid in the world learns about it, and lots of people depend on it to find exactly what they want or need. I spend the bulk of my time cruising

the 641's and 813's when in a library and know that I can find a host of items to tickle my fancy in either section.

Knowing where to find your favorite stuff, the things you go to regularly, is hugely important for patrons. The way that libraries are organized definitely meets nearly every objective of being a good brand. The huge chain stores have picked up on this. In fact, think of a store like Wal-Mart. I'm not a fan of Wal-Mart at all, but I do love that I can walk into any Wal-Mart anywhere in the country and head immediately over to the cough syrup section. Whatever I need at Wal-Mart, I can pretty much find it. Why? Because each store is virtually the same, based on the library model of using the same classification system to organize thousands of very different materials.

But while libraries have so many things in common, they are also all highly individual. Even libraries that are part of the same system or are a branch of another have their very own personalities that cater specifically to a community. As "Creating the Customer Driven Library" points out, libraries are "not cookie-cutter copies of one another, nor are they meant to be. Instead, libraries can pool the creative talents of their staffs to reach out in new directions. Is it possible for libraries, on the one hand, to effectively train all staff members to rival the bookstore's high standards of customer service but, on the other hand, encourage them to bring their own uniquely individual talents to their work?" If this goal can be achieved, then libraries may just have created the most successful brand in the entire world.



Charitable Giving in the United States

- 89 percent of households give.¹
- The average annual contribution for contributors is \$1,620.¹
- Giving to the arts and education saw donations rise more than 6 percent in 2006.^{2,4}
- It is estimated total charitable contributions will total between \$21.2 to \$55.4 trillion in between 1998-2052.³
- Corporate foundations gave \$4.2 billion in 2006 and 57% expect to give more in 2007.⁵
- In 2006, 83 percent of total contributions came from donations from individuals, including bequests.²

Sources:

- *Giving & Volunteering in the United States 2001, Independent Sector*
- *Giving USA 2007*
- Center on Wealth and Philanthropy
- *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*
- The Foundation Center

Giving

My husband and I don't make a lot of money, but we firmly believe in giving back. We donate money to a number of organizations that work to promote things in which we believe strongly or are members of organizations at places where we regularly attend events.

But there's another key in getting my husband and I to donate money to your organization. It's simple really. Ask us.

We receive regular solicitations from our alma maters, all of which we donate to. We also receive regular solicitations from a number of educational and cultural organizations. We have to pick and choose who we donate to on this list and our decision, much like our

decisions to donate to the colleges and universities we have attended, is based on what we get in return from the asking organization. I'm not talking gifts for the money I send; what I mean is how I utilize this organization. The events I attend, the way I am treated as a customer, the value I place on the services received.

If I received a letter from the Lewis & Clark Library Friends Group asking for a donation, I'd definitely mail them a check. It might not be huge, but I love my library, as do most people, and if asked, the library would receive.



Interlibrary Loan

My husband is working on his master's degree and I am writing a non-fiction book. This means we do a lot of research, and a lot of the research we need is not available online or through databases, but is instead found in good old-fashioned books.

Of course the Lewis & Clark Library does not own many of the obscure titles we need. But thankfully, there is interlibrary loan. Even with all of my library experience, I am always dismayed to find that my local library does not own a title and then pleasantly surprised when the librarian offers up interlibrary loan as a way to get it. They may not own it, but they can get it for me – for free! Amazing.

When I get an interlibrary loan book, I am always curious to see where the book came from. As a marketing person, I always think libraries could do a simple bookmark inserted into the book that reminds the recipient of just how far that book has traveled to come into their hands – at no cost to them, but at a cost to the library – a service that only libraries offer to their patrons.

The other thing that always interests me is what other folks have checked out via interlibrary loan. The Lewis & Clark Library puts all interlibrary loan items into white bags onto which they write the title and due date of the item inside. It seems there is no limit

to the requests that people have – from Miles Davis CDs to things my husband requests, like obscure Russian history books, sometimes written in Russian.

Interlibrary loan is an incredible service provided to library patrons. The very idea that you can get whatever you need, whether your library owns it or not, for free for whatever your use of this material might be is amazing. I am always waiting for the librarian to ask me what I need my interlibrary loan items for, to see if it is a worthy cause to go to all of the trouble involved. But they never ask! No request is too small!

I know from my work at the State Library that interlibrary loan is not working well for libraries anymore. But the other side of that is that as well as interlibrary loan works for patrons, patrons are now coming to expect more.

In our world of instant gratification, waiting several days for a book to come is a pain. But the other thing that doesn't work for me with interlibrary loan is the amount of time you have with a book. It seems that interlibrary loan materials are often not renewable, and by the time you get them, you have a short time with the book in your hands. This is not



a big deal if you have a small book but it becomes a very big deal if you need the book for a couple of months' worth of research. Short of copying the entire book or just not returning it on time, you don't have a lot of options available.

So interlibrary loan is not working as well as it could and patrons are expecting and needing more. I'm sure this is not news for you. I don't have any ideas on how to fix this; I'm not a librarian – just a patron. Please just make sure that I continue to get all of the great stuff offered by libraries all over the world.

Three Year-Old Predicts Trends

When my three year-old, Mike, wants to look at or find something, he often says, "Let's go look on the computer!"

Granted, he doesn't understand how information magically appears there, but he does understand that virtually everything he could ever want or need to know is available – instantly. Whether it's the latest in the Playmobil collection, video from our last vacation, the song "The Bear Necessities", or a video of astronauts fixing something on the international space station, we can find it on the computer. This is a child who, when presented with a picture of a rotary dial phone in a book, didn't know what it was. But he knows how to use an iPod. This is a child who prefers to look through pictures on the computer rather than in a photo album. This is a child who suggests we check the computer to see if it's too cold for a walk instead of opening up the door and checking the air outside.

What does this mean for libraries? It means that the next generations of people will not

only be used to accessing accurate information instantly in a variety of technological formats; it will be the way they have always operated. It means that libraries will need to serve up information on their Web site and through databases quickly and easily in order to stay relevant as the source for accurate information. It means that services like "Ask-A-Librarian" will become more and more important as people expect 24/7 access to collections and information.

Yet for all of Mike's technological savvy, (if you can call a three year-old savvy about anything), he loves reading books. In fact, a special excursion, one that ranks right up there with a visit to the local carousel, is our bi-weekly expedition to the Library. He has his own library card now, and he absolutely delights in getting to help select an enormous stack of books to get him through the next two weeks. He also loves to help pick

out books for his little brother, Peter. As soon as we get home, Mike sits down on the floor and starts flipping through his new books and he will often sit down next to Peter and show him one of his new board books.

So even as the future generations become more and more technologically adept, I think that books and the library as place will still remain an important haven.



State Librarian's Office

Darlene Staffeldt, State Librarian
Kris Schmitz, Central Services

Montana State Library Commission

Donald Allen, Chair
Bonnie Allen
Cheri Bergeron, Alternate for Supt. of
Public Instruction
Cindy Carrywater
Marsha Hinch
Linda McCulloch, Superintendent of
Public Instruction
Ron Moody
Nora Smith

Statewide Library Resources

Bob Cooper

Montana Talking Book Library

Christie Briggs

Montana State Digital Library
Jim Hill

Montana State Library

1515 East Sixth Avenue
PO Box 201800
Helena, MT 59620-1800
phone: (406) 444-3115
toll free in MT: (800) 338-5087
TDD: (406) 444-3005
fax: (406) 444-0266
<http://msl.mt.gov>
msl@mt.gov

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Sara Groves, Editor

Stacy Bruhn, Designer

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*Have an Absolutely
Wonderful
Holiday Season!!!*



Montana State Library
1515 East Sixth Avenue
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Libraries Reach Higher

Over and over, we hear that libraries are in danger of becoming extinct – that with Google, Amazon.com, Barnes and Noble, the Internet – libraries have one foot in the grave.

Of course, I love libraries and use libraries so I don't think this is true at all. But the fact of the matter is that the world is changing and people need and want and expect more from libraries. If libraries don't deliver, and I certainly don't think this will happen as a whole, but perhaps some libraries will become less valued in their communities.

For libraries that are changing and working hard to meet their community's needs, however, the sky is the limit. For example, take a look at the Darby Community Library. Since their new library building opened, the number of library visitors has increased 400 percent. The Darby Library is probably an extreme example of how a library has changed in order to better meet the needs of its patrons, but you get the idea.

Libraries must continue to look inward and outward to evolve to find new and interesting ways to meet the ever-growing demands of their communities. That is, perhaps, the most exciting part of this – your communities want more! They need more! Your patrons are accessing your collection and information resources in ways that they never have before. Instead of having one foot in the grave, it seems to me that libraries are on an upward climb – trying to reach the summit, if you will, of serving an increasingly diverse, increasingly informed group of people. What an incredible time to be part of libraries as we all climb upward together.

